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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper was to examine the procedures a state may use to implement a teacher incentive program to recruit individuals into the profession. This paper describes the selection and monitoring process Missouri uses to implement its state incentive program. The intent of the Missouri Teacher Education Scholarship program is to attract academically talented individuals into the teaching profession. A profile of the recipients indicates that the average American College Testing (ACT) score for the Missouri recipient is at the 85th percentile and the average class rank is 13 percent. Most of the recipients are females wishing to teach at the elementary level. (Author)

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IMPLEMENTATION OF A TEACHER INCENTIVE PROGRAM TO RECRUIT  
ACADEMICALLY TALENTED PEOPLE INTO THE TEACHING PROFESSION

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#### **Abstract of the Study**

The purpose of this paper was to examine the procedures a state may use to implement a teacher incentive program to recruit individuals into the profession. This paper describes the selection and monitoring process Missouri uses to implement its state incentive program.

The intent of the Missouri Teacher Education Scholarship program is to attract academically talented individuals into the teaching profession. A profile of the recipients indicates that the average ACT for the Missouri recipient is at the 85 percentile and the average class rank is 13 percent. Most of the recipients are females wishing to teach at the elementary level.

## Introduction

The literature indicates there is a problem of encouraging the best and the brightest to enter and remain in the teaching profession. As a result of "A Nation at Risk" (1983) the public has become worried about the caliber of individuals entering the teaching profession.

A compelling body of data indicates that children on the average, are being taught by individuals with a history of poor test scores. In 1973, the SAT mean verbal score of preservice teachers was 27 points below the national average; the math score was 32 points below average. By 1981 the scores had dropped even lower to 34 points below the national average verbal score and 48 points below the national average math score. Among graduating seniors in a National Longitudinal Study, education majors ranked 14th among 16 fields on SAT verbal scores, and 15th on SAT math scores. (Sykes, 1983; Weaner, 1979.) Many teacher education programs admit students with scores at the 50 percentile on the ACT and SAT exams; this means teachers may have lower scores on these exams than the students they will be teaching.

This type of data only reinforces negative stereotypes of teachers and damages the public perception of the teaching profession. Often times, students with academic ability are often not encouraged to enter the teaching profession which creates poor public relations for the teaching profession. The teaching profession also is perceived as having low socioeconomic status. Students from families of high economic status are likely to be influenced by parents and peers to view teaching as a downwardly mobile career choice (Vance & Schlechty, 1982). Labor market conditions and other developments have also altered the attractiveness of teaching.

There is cause for concern about the academic quality of students entering the profession. As long as teacher education institutions and state agencies continue to recruit a majority of students from among individuals scoring poorly on measures of academic ability, teacher education will unlikely be able to command the respect and resources excellence requires.

Lyons (1980) remarked the "gifted students are forced to choose between a teaching certificate and a decent education" noting that potential teachers are lost to education each year because bright students "have too much self-respect to submit themselves to such play acting."

Morale among teachers is low and the public attitude toward teaching as a profession has dropped. Kluender (1984) reported that in 1970, 19 percent of college students expressed an interest in elementary teaching as a career; by 1982, only 4.9 percent of freshmen surveyed were interested in teaching at the elementary level. At the secondary level this is also true: In 1970, 11 percent of college freshmen surveyed were interested in secondary teaching; by 1982, only 1.7 percent planned to teach in the secondary schools.

Student financial aid has been proposed as one incentive to attract talented students into the teaching profession. Offering scholarships in exchange for five-year teaching commitments and offering low interest loans to qualified education majors are among the most popular incentives. (Hopfingardner & Lasley, 1984; Palaich, 1983.) The National Commission on Excellence in Education (1984) recommends that "incentives, such as grants and loans, should be made available to attract outstanding students to the teaching profession particularly in those areas of critical shortage."

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In 1984, the United States Congress passed an amendment to the Higher Education Act of 1965 to encourage entry into the teaching profession (United States Congress, 1984). The task force of the Education and Labor Committee made several recommendations regarding improvements in teaching, including the creation of a program of scholarships to attract the best and the brightest teachers.

These Carl D. Perkins Scholarships renamed Congressional Teacher Scholarships (1986) and renamed again Paul Douglas (1987) are based solely on merit. The program is eligible for those individuals who score in the top 10 percent of their high school class. The recipient would then teach in a public or private elementary or secondary school for two years in exchange for every one year of the scholarship received.

However, as the need for competent and qualified teachers increases, states will need to assume the responsibility for providing incentives for prospective teachers (Arfin, 1986). Presently there are only 14 states (including Missouri) who offer teacher incentive programs for preservice teachers. Examination of these 14 state's programs indicate that these incentive programs usually are to encourage minorities (5) and for critical need areas (6) and academically talented individuals (3).

As was mentioned earlier the burden of recruiting teachers with incentive programs is dependent on the states. However, only 27 percent of the states have such programs. We need to do more to encourage states to establish incentive programs for recruiting teachers. As a result of the "Nation at Risk" it appears that the

federal government has diminished its role in reforming schools and has placed this burden of responsibility on the state to initiate educational reform and selection of teachers.

#### **The Missouri Teacher Education Scholarship Program**

In 1985, the Missouri legislature created the Teacher Education Scholarship Program. This program first implemented during the 1986-87 school year provides \$2000 scholarships to encourage top-ranking high school graduates and freshmen or sophomore college students to begin a career in teaching.

In 1985, the Missouri legislature decided to implement an educational package reform to address the concerns published by "A Nation at Risk." The Missouri Teacher Education Scholarship was just one of the programs implemented by the legislature to improve education.

The legislature had done some research as to the needs of their state and developed programs based on their findings. The main reform package was for the teacher; the state developed incentives to retain teachers and developed professional development and scholarship programs to attract and assist new individuals into the teaching profession. The main findings from the legislative research was that Missouri may face a teacher shortage due to teacher retirement and dissatisfied teachers leaving the field. The Missouri Teacher Education Scholarship was an important incentive to attract individuals into the teaching profession. Once there, the legislature would then establish programs to assist beginning teachers and require districts to pay teachers a guaranteed minimum salary.

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"Eligible applicants" are defined as residents of Missouri who meet the following criteria.

1. Applicants are high school seniors or freshmen or sophomores in a four-year Missouri college, university, junior or community college;
2. Applicants make a commitment to pursue an approved teacher education program and enroll as full-time students in a four-year college or university located in Missouri;
3. Applicants have achieved scores at or above the 85th percentile on a nationally-normed test of academic ability or have achieved a high school grade point average ranking them in the upper 15% of their senior class.

Scholarship recipients must teach in a Missouri public school for five years or the state's portion of the scholarship (\$1000) converts into a loan which must be repaid within two years at an interest rate of 9.5%. The potential obligation of each recipient will be reduced by one-fifth for each year of teaching.

The scholarship is a one-time, nonrenewable award of \$2000. One half of each scholarship is paid by the State of Missouri and the other half is paid by the 36 participating colleges and universities across the State that offer approved teacher education programs. All Missouri institutions with state approved teacher education programs participate in this program. In 1985, when the program began, most Missouri institutions matched only a small number of scholarships. But as the program continued to grow and the Missouri institutions begin to see the benefits of the program, they have increased their number of scholarships. At least 6 of the 36 institutions now offer an unlimited number of matched scholarships.

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Last year, three of the larger institutions in Missouri actively recruited individuals to apply for the scholarship. The financial aid offices sent an application (see appendix) and brochure to those individuals who were considering a career in teaching. Because of these recruiting techniques one institution increased their number of recipients who wished to begin their teacher education program at that institution from 30 to 50.

In the fall, letters of intent to participate in this program are sent to Missouri institutions who have approved teacher education programs. At this point the institution determines whether it will participate in the program and the number of scholarships it will be willing to match. It also identifies the contact people who will be responsible for assisting the Department with monitoring the recipients.

The contact people are usually either in financial aid, education or admissions. However, a large percentage of the contact people are from the financial aid area. This may occur because contact people are responsible for the checks and determining the number of scholarships the institution will match. The contact people are responsible for these recipients. They oversee that recipients complete student status forms and promissory notes. The contact people are to notify the Department if a recipient drops from the program. Because of the paperwork involved with this program it requires a tremendous amount of the contact people's time to maintain this program. Past recipients are required to complete a student status form on an annual basis. New recipients receive a check for each semester and are required to sign a promissory note and a student status form the year they receive the money.

Contact people and Department personnel are responsible for completing the paperwork for this program. A data base computer system is used to track students and maintain the whereabouts of each recipient. Presently the numbers are small for this program but as these numbers continue to increase other options will need to be considered for tracking students. This may consist of hiring an outside agency to assist with Department monitoring.

In 1985, the General Assembly appropriated \$210,000 for the Missouri Teacher Education Scholarship Program. The number of scholarships has maintained at 210 for the fiscal year of 1987 and 1988. However, last year when the Missouri Loan program was phased out, the Missouri Teacher Education Scholarship program acquired additional funds for 50 scholarships. For the 1990 fiscal year, the Department expects to award a total of 260 scholarships.

#### **Selection of Recipients.**

The criteria used to select recipients is determined by the legislature. Recipients are selected from a group of eligible applicants on the basis of performance in the following areas.

- 1) Participation in school/community activities.
- 2) Demonstrated leadership abilities.
- 3) Effective interpersonal skills.
- 4) Wide range of interests and hobbies.
- 5) Career interest in teaching.
- 6) Effective communication skills.

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education which administers the scholarship program is responsible for developing the application to select recipients. The application has undergone several revisions since the original application was used.

The Department was responsible for assigning points (see appendix) for the criteria established by the legislature. Points were assigned based on the emphasis of test scores, class rank, recommendations and the essay portion of the scholarship (see appendix). Because the intent of this scholarship program was to attract academically talented individuals more emphasis for awarding these scholarships was placed on the test scores and class rank.

The total number of points for the scholarship was determined by the contact people and Department personnel. Most points were awarded for test scores and class rank. Equal amount of points were given for school/community activities and recommendations. Points for the essay were determined on the ability of the applicant to respond to the question and on sentence structure.

Also during the administration of the program it became apparent in the literature that there is a growing need to encourage minorities to enter the teaching profession. In 1987, the Department decided to award additional points for minorities and for areas of critical need in the State.

Presently those minorities who met the criteria were awarded the scholarship. There were only 13 minorities who applied but two were ineligible which means only 11 minorities are participating in this program. The Department feels there needs to be additional recruiting for this program and that the State should develop more scholarship opportunities and recruiting programs to encourage minorities to enter the teaching profession.

The number of applications for this program has increased for each year. In 1986, the Department received over 500 applications and

only 300 met the criteria. In 1987 and 1988 the number of applications increased to 750 with 500 of the applicants being eligible. Applications are sent to school counselors, contact people and junior colleges in early December and the deadline date for returning applications is February 15. Last year, the decision was made to send private schools applications as long as the recipient would agree to teach in a public school for five years. As a result of this decision, Missouri private institutions increased their Missouri Teacher Education Scholarship recipient number. We also saw an increase in the number of applicants who wanted to attend private schools in Missouri.

The Department is responsible for developing the committees to select recipients. The applications are read at least a total of three times with a fourth reading only if there is a discrepancy in the scores. The first two readings are usually done by the Department personnel. Department readers are assigned a certain number of applications to read and then they assign points based on criteria given to them. The second readings are then done by an independent group from outside the agency. These include counselors, deans of education, contact people, directors of personnel and legislators. They are responsible for the third reading and forth reading if necessary.

Because of the newness of the program and the lack of continuity over time, the selection process has changed somewhat each year. The reason for this is the Department is trying to discover the best and fairest methods for selecting recipients. The first year of the program there was no set criteria or discrimination among areas as

determined by the legislature. The test scores and class rank were used only to get into the pool. Once in the pool these applicants were evaluated only on recommendations and essays. As a result, several recipients went into the program with low ACT scores which means they would not be eligible for a teacher education program.

The second year the application was completely revised with criteria established to eliminate problems from the previous year. More emphasis was placed on test scores and developing a system to unify the selection process among the two groups of readers. As a result of these changes, the system has had some consistency over time and brought recognition to the program.

Once the recipients are selected they receive letters from the Commissioner of Education and are told how to proceed to insure their scholarship money. It has become apparent over time, the need to really educate recipients about the program regulations to eliminate future problems. Most recipients are not aware of their responsibilities when accepting the scholarship money.

#### **Monitoring and Tracking the Recipients.**

The Department has sole responsibility for monitoring recipients. The contact people assist with tracking those recipients enrolled at their institutions. However, once the recipient graduates from a teacher education program, the Department uses the classification files (this is the State system which uses data to identify teachers and classify schools) to assure that recipients are completing their required five years of teaching. Presently, a computer system is being developed to assist the Department personnel. The system will review the Department's classification files to check the recipient's social security number to verify that he/she is completing his/her required five years of teaching in the State of Missouri.

The monitoring of students is a time consuming and paper chasing nightmare. The personnel responsible for this project have actually recruited to seek additional help either through hiring a tracking agency or additional personnel. Most of the monitoring is done with a data base system. The file is set up for defaulters, seniors, enrolled students and teachers. If a recipient changes his/her status then she or he is placed in the appropriate file.

The problem with tracking recipients comes with the loss of paperwork or a recipient doesn't notify the Department about a change of status or address. Presently the number of recipients to monitor is low but as the program continues to grow, there is great concern over tracking students. Recipients are sent letters when they are in default. They are informed about payment regulations and are given a payment schedule. When a recipient fails to make a payment they are sent reminders and eventually their names are sent to the Attorney General's Office. Fortunately, the Department has been fortunate that all defaulters have made the first scheduled payment. But in the future no steps have been taken with the attorney general's office to garnish recipient's wages for payment.

The Department did research and discovered that the Department spends more money to track the recipients then it costs the program. Average cost for tracking each student for a total of nine years is approximately \$2400; the recipient only needs to repay \$1000 of this scholarship. The Department spends more time and money tracking recipients in order to comply with the legislative rules of this program. As a result of this information, no decisions by the legislature have been made to consider dropping the required five years of teaching.

Finally, as the number of recipients graduating from teacher education programs increase, the Department needs to consider some type of placement service for seniors. Because the number of seniors are small, Department personnel has sent superintendents in the state the names of these seniors. But when the number of graduating recipients increases each year to 250 or more, there is concern about recipients completing their required five years of teaching. We hope superintendents will become aware of the program and hire these teachers for their district.

#### **Profile of Recipients**

For the last three years the Department awarded a total of 680 scholarships to Missouri recipients who met the criteria of either ranking in the top 15 percent of their class or scored in the top 15 percent on a nationally normed test.

Presently, there are 572 enrolled in teacher education programs and only 34 who are in default of the program regulations. (This means the recipient must be enrolled full-time in a four-year state approved teacher education program, or they must begin repayment of the scholarship.) When the Department awarded the scholarships, 74 recipients decided not to accept the award.

There are 23 recipients who are beginning their required five-year teaching commitment. There was only one student out of the first group who for personal reasons did not choose to leave his home area. Many of the graduated recipients are in all areas of the State of Missouri. There was concern that because so many of the recipients were from the St. Louis and Kansas City areas, they would only locate in those areas. However, the data seems to suggest otherwise. Only over time will the Department be able to determine where the recipients will begin their five-year teaching commitment.

The intent of this program was to recruit academically talented individuals into the teaching profession. This seems to be evident by examining the test scores and class rank of all the recipients. The profile of the recipients for the first two years indicate that 91% of the recipients are female and 52% of the recipients wanted to teach at the secondary level. The average ACT scores for the first two groups was 25 (84 percentile) and the average class rank was 13 percent.

This year 82 percent of the 1988 recipients are female and 41 percent of the recipients want to teach in critical needs. (This increase may be due to the use of assigning additional points for minority status, critical need areas and non traditional students. This was the first time this technique was used.) The average ACT score for the 1988 group increased to 24.9 and an increased class rank of 11.9 percent. (This also may be caused because of the assigning more points in the area of academic ability.)

Because no information was kept regarding minority applications, there are no comparisons among the groups. However, in 1988, 11 minorities were awarded the scholarship and only 9 of those accepted the scholarship. The Department is aware of the need to recruit minorities but lacks resources, personnel and money to actively recruit minorities for the scholarship.

#### **Conclusion**

There is little research to support the premise that academically talented teachers are better teachers than those teachers who score less on similar test scores. However, Levin (1970) compared the effects of selecting brighter, rather than more experienced teachers.

According to his results, hiring teachers of higher verbal ability would be five to ten times more effective per dollar of expenditure in increasing student's achievement than hiring more experienced teachers. The Department needs to pursue more studies in following these recipients. Periodically, the Department will receive phone calls from superintendents and contact people regarding the quality of these recipients but how does this correlate with a recipient's ability to teach and remain in the profession?

Student financial aid has been proposed as one incentive to attract talented students into teaching. Because of the "newness" of Missouri's incentive program, there is no clear evidence as of yet that this program will be successful in achieving its goal. Hopefully, if the legislature continues to fund this program and it is well administered, this program will be able to recruit people into the teaching profession. But now the Department needs to work through problems of monitoring students, placement of recipients and providing personnel to keep the program organized.

However, as this program continues to grow the philosophical intent of using this program to recruit academically talented people into the profession has changed. There is more pressure to use the program for recruiting minorities and critical need areas. The state legislature needs to reconsider using this program to cure its state ills for minorities. The state needs to develop programs for minorities and consider more options for this population.

The purpose of this analysis of the implementation of a state incentive program is to assist other states in developing similar programs. The Department has learned a great deal from this experience which will be useful for those developing incentive programs for teachers.

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